



CARE Meeting Notes – February 26, 2019

Tuesday, February 26, 2019, 1:00 PM – 3:00 PM CST
East Chicago Waterway Management District Board Room

In Attendance: Michael Spinar, Michelle Caldwell (IDEM); Maggie Byrne, Bri Ciara (IDNR – LMCP); Emily Stork (IDNR - DNP); Paul Labus (TNC); Maureen Turman (NiSource); Fernando Treviño (City of East Chicago); Ashley Overton (City of Gary)

Via phone: Hala Kuss, Jim Bailey, Dav Parry (IDEM); Jennifer Birchfield (Urban Waters Federal Partnership); Peg Donnelly, Kristen Isom (U.S. EPA); Joe Exl (NIRPC); Kay Nelson (NWI Forum); Carl Wodrich (IDNR); Victoria Wittig (Save The Dunes); Caitie Nigrelli (Illinois-Indiana Sea Grant)

Public Attendees: Two members of the public were in attendance

1. Introductions:

Michael Spinar called the meeting to order and took attendance from those in-person and calling in.

2. Sediment Management Actions (BUIs #1-2, #4-7) Update

a. Lake George Branch Middle & East

The Great Lakes Legacy Act Project Agreement between EPA and the non-federal sponsors (the East Chicago Waterway Management District, Atlantic Richfield Co., and BP) has been approved, although, with the lapse in appropriations and resulting furlough of EPA staff, the ECWMD has not received a signed copy.

BP is beginning initial work to remove obstructions and construct a sheet pile wall along the canal. EPA's contractor will conduct dredging and capping of the East Portion and capping of the Middle Portion, following that initial work. Dredged material from the Lake George East Project will be placed into the adjacent Confined Disposal Facility (CDF).

As a reminder, the East Portion extends from Indianapolis Boulevard in East Chicago to the CSX railroad bridge, including Reach 12 of the federal navigation channel as designated by the U.S. Army Corps. The Middle Portion extends from the CSX bridge to the BP land bridge.

b. East Branch, Phase II

EPA has allocated approximately \$570,000 in funding to conduct a 30% Remedial Design for this project. Currently, the project is expected to be completed in the spring of 2019. As a reminder, East Branch Phase II includes the dredging and capping of 2.5



miles of the East Branch of the Grand Calumet River between Cline Avenue and the US Steel Reach in Gary, as well as closure of the Ralston Street Lagoon in Gary.

c. Junction Reach

A 70% design of the Junction Reach was completed in 2015, with the report being released in early 2016. EPA, IDEM, and the East Chicago Waterway Management District are still working to identify non-federal cost share for the project. The agreement signed between AR/BP and the ECWMD includes the provision of any non-federal cost share overmatch on the Lake George Branch Middle and East Project to this reach. The Junction Reach includes approximately 1.5 miles of the Indiana Harbor Ship Canal south of Columbus Drive and approximately 1.4 miles of the Grand Calumet River between Indianapolis Boulevard and Kennedy Avenue.

d. Dredging of Navigational Channel

The contractor conducting the congressionally authorized navigational dredging project in the Indiana Harbor Ship Canal on behalf of the US Army Corps has demobilized for the season. Approximately 162,592 cubic yards of sediment within and adjacent to the federal channel have been dredged and placed in the Indiana Harbor Ship Canal Confined Disposal Facility during 2018. Water treatment will continue until the spring. To date, the US Army Corps of Engineers has dredged approximately 1.4 million cubic yards of sediment. The Army Corps estimates one to two additional years of dredging will be necessary to clear the remaining sediment backlog.

Isolated areas of the Indiana Harbor Ship Canal that are due to be dredged by the Army Corps of Engineers contain contaminated sediment with PCB levels above 50 parts per million (ppm). Disposal of these sediments is regulated by the Toxic Substances Control Act (TSCA). In 2014, the U.S. Army Corps requested a risk-based approval from EPA and IDEM under TSCA to dispose of this sediment in the CDF. In early 2017, EPA and IDEM issued a draft approval of the Army Corps permit. During the resulting comment period, the public requested that EPA and IDEM review alternative disposal options for this material.

EPA, IDEM, Arcelor, and the US Army Corps worked with a contractor to conduct a feasibility study to evaluate alternative disposal options for contaminated sediments containing greater than 50 ppm PCBs. The feasibility study was completed December 13, 2018. Out of eight different alternatives, which included off-site disposal and incineration, the only feasible option for safe and cost-effective removal of the PCB-contaminated sediments was determined to be a combination of mechanical dredging, disposal, and containment at the Indiana Harbor Confined Disposal Facility (CDF), along with implementation of various institutional controls at the site. On December 19, 2018, IDEM and EPA issued final risk-based approvals to the U.S. Army Corps for the disposal of contaminated sediment regulated under TSCA. The feasibility study and



final approval documents may be found on EPA's website at <https://www.epa.gov/in/indiana-harbor-canal>.

3. Habitat Management Actions (BUI #3 & BUI #14) Update

a. Management Action #1 – Dune, Swale, and Riverine Restoration

The IDNR, Nature Conservancy (TNC), and Lake County Parks crews continue to conduct dormant season work at the properties. Crews have focused on cleanup of the properties and cutting/treating of invasive and aggressive native trees and shrubs during the season. Winter woody clearing is essentially complete at Gibson Woods and Tolleston Ridges Nature Preserves; only minor work removing cut piles of cut wood remains.

b. Management Action #2 – River Corridor Establishment

IDEM has completed an access agreement template and obtained the legal description and owner contact information for most of the parcels within the project area. Eight parcels have been identified within the project area for which clear ownership information and a legal description is not available. Once IDEM obtains this information, the agency will be able to reach out to the appropriate property owners. The agency plans to submit a project application once this outreach is complete.

c. Management Action #3 – Lake George Branch Wetlands Restoration

IDNR's contractor, Conservation Land Stewardship, completed invasive control for the 2018 growing season in early October. The company is under contract through March 2020 and will be doing invasive control again in 2019.

d. Management Action #4 – Prescribed Fire Plan/Contractual Burns

All entities have received funding to conduct prescribed burns through September 2021. TNC and Lake County Parks have awarded contracts to Pizzo and ENCAP, respectively, to complete prescribed burns. IDNR will conduct bid openings in mid-December. Shirley Heinze is also working through the bidding process. IDNR conducted a prescribed burn on December 18, 2018 at Pine Station.

e. Management Action #5 – Pine Station Ponds and Oxbow

IDNR continues to work with their contractor to explore restoration options at the site.

f. Early Detections

No early detection species have been identified so far.



4. Eutrophication (BUI #8) Update

IDEM is currently discussing the existing BUI removal target with EPA and working to clarify the process for assessing the status of the AOC with respect to this BUI. At the end of December, IDEM sent materials to the BUI #8 Technical Review Lead for his review and comment and is currently awaiting a response.

5. Beach Closures (BUI #10) Update

Michelle Caldwell gave a [presentation](#) on the Beach Closures BUI, including a summary of the nuisance shorebird deterrence measures employed during the 2018 beach season. Following the presentation, Michelle received several questions from CARE members, including questions on when the dogs typically get started and why samples exceeded most often in May. Michelle responded that sample exceedances typically occur most often early in the season – in May and June.

Comments were also received regarding the collection of trash at the beaches, and suggestions were made that IDEM should ensure that it is working with the IDNR's Division of Fish and Wildlife to ensure that there are no impacts to non-target birds from the nuisance shorebird deterrence program. It was suggested that the Wild Goose Chase data be provided to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and/or IDNR.

6. Aesthetics (BUI #11) Update

Michelle Caldwell gave a [presentation](#) on the Degradation of Aesthetics BUI. Following the presentation, IDEM received several questions from CARE members. CARE members requested additional clarification regarding the location of various outfalls located in the vicinity of Cline Avenue. In response to a question regarding discharges from the CSO outfall at Columbia Avenue, Michael stated that it was his understanding that the combined sewer overflow (CSO) outfall at Columbia Avenue was not being utilized by the Hammond Sanitary District, and that the CSO Retention basin has dramatically reduced CSO discharges from that location. In response to a question on nutrient levels in the vicinity of the U.S. Steel monitoring site, IDEM stated that the agency would have to consult its records on the matter.

7. Plankton (BUI #13) Monitoring Update

All of the general and nutrient chemistry data and plankton taxonomic data have been received for this project. IDEM has also just received the chlorophyll-a data from USGS. IU Bloomington's Shaw Lab plans to release the toxicity bioassay data to IDEM in March, along with a draft of its final project report. IDEM is working with IU and PhycoTech to set up a report out on the results of the study in mid-May.

8. Education and Outreach Activities



Due to a scheduling conflict on IDEM's part, we are postponing the CARE Public Learning Session scheduled for March 26 until June. This will also allow for time to widely publicize the event. The City of Gary has been extremely helpful in helping to plan the event. IDEM is also working to schedule CARE Workgroup Meetings for the remainder of 2019. CARE members were told to expect an updated schedule shortly.

9. Table Talk

Items shared during the Table Talk portion of the meeting included:

- Caitie Nigrelli shared that the Annual Grand Calumet River Stewardship Day will be held with area fourth graders at Seidner Dune and Swale on May 21. The planning committee is working to get VIPs and press coverage for the event. There will be four stations, similar to last year (macroinvertebrate sampling, fish, birding/coastal ecosystem, and dune and swale).
- Kay Nelson reported that Cathy Stepp, the EPA Region 5 Regional Administrator was proposing to conduct a tour of the area.
- IDEM reported that the Michigan City Conference on the Environment will be held June 7 at the Blue Chip Casino in Michigan City.
- IDEM reported that the agency planned to bring the W.G. Jackson education and research vessel to the Hammond Marina on June 10 and 11.

10. Public Comment

Two members of the public were present and made various comments concerning the Nearshore Bird Deterrence Program and environmental concerns about George Lake.

Next Workgroup Meeting: To Be Determined